



National Parks of the Southwest

It's a land of scenes epic in scope, from the immense Grand Canyon and the winding Colorado to the sandstone spires of Bryce and the red-rock cliffs and chasms of Zion. It's the Southwest, which our small group celebrates at favorite national parks and preserves. And, wrote author Wallace Stegner, it's America's "best idea."

Itinerary

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Day-by-Day Itinerary

DAY 1: Depart for Phoenix, Arizona

We depart today for Phoenix, Arizona. As guests' arrival times may vary, we have the day at leisure to explore Arizona's capital city as we wish. This afternoon we check in at our hotel, where we enjoy a welcome briefing and dinner together.

Accommodations: Hilton Phoenix Tapatio Cliffs Resort

Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Phoenix

This morning we visit the acclaimed Desert Botanical Garden, the 140-acre tribute to the flora of the Sonoran desert. With more than 4,000 species of plants, including almost 500 rare and endangered types, the Botanical Garden features nature paths and walking trails showcasing the beauty of the desert environment. We continue on to Old Town Scottsdale, the city's historic core, where we have free time to browse the shops and galleries and enjoy lunch on our own. Then we return to our hotel, where the remainder of the day is at leisure to enjoy the outdoor pool and other amenities. Dinner tonight is on our own.

Accommodations: Hilton Phoenix Tapatio Cliffs Resort

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3: Phoenix/Sedona/Williams

We leave Phoenix today bound for Williams, a short distance from the Grand Canyon. First, though, we're headed to Sedona, one of the most striking spots in the American Southwest. Famed for its range of towering red sandstone formations, Sedona ranks as a popular destination for artists, filmmakers, photographers, mountain bikers, and hikers. We have time for lunch on our own and to do some exploring before we encounter this dazzling landscape in style as we take a Pink Jeep tour for an educational off-road excursion. Winding over dirt roads, we enjoy stunning panoramic views and learn about the region's cultural and geological history on this guided tour to Honanki Heritage Site, a 700-year-old Sinaguan cliff dwelling. Then we continue north to our hotel, a few blocks from Route 66. We dine together tonight.

Accommodations: Grand Canyon Railway Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4: Williams/Grand Canyon

It's a day to remember as we visit one of the country's most famous natural landmarks: the Grand Canyon. A wonder of the natural world, this UNESCO site stretches nearly 300 miles through and 10 miles across the Arizona desert. We see awe-inspiring vistas: banded layers of rock rise to plateaus and bluffs thousands of feet overhead, while the mighty Colorado River rushes one mile below. On our guided tour, we learn about the canyon's geological history, and also about human history here: it dates back some 10,000 years and includes Native peoples, explorers, miners, entrepreneurs, conservationists, and of course, visitors, who today number some six million annually. Then we have time for lunch on our own and an afternoon and evening at leisure to appreciate the magnitude and beauty of the six-million-year-old canyon as we wish. After this bucket-list day, dinner tonight is on our own.

Accommodations: Kachina Lodge

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5: Grand Canyon/Page/Antelope Canyon/Lake Powell

Today we travel to Page, Arizona, gateway to the imposing Glen Canyon Dam and its reservoir, Lake Powell. After reaching Page early this afternoon, we have lunch on our own then visit the sinuous – and spectacular – Upper Antelope Canyon. We travel onto Navajo land to reach this slot canyon, known to local tribes as “the place where water runs through rocks” – and one of the most photographed slot canyons in the world. Our tour through this stunning passageway reveals red-orange walls of “flowing” rock rising to heights of nearly 120 feet – the narrow canyon's hard edges smoothed away by eons of water and sand erosion. We check in at our lakeside hotel this afternoon and then enjoy dinner together there tonight.

Accommodations: Lake Powell Resort

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: Page/Colorado River/Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah

Our long but incredibly scenic day of travel begins with a rousing motorized rafting excursion on the smooth waters of the Colorado River. Controlled by a series of dams and reservoirs, the river provides hydroelectric power, irrigation, and municipal water supply to nearly 40 million people in the western U.S. Today we'll both motor and drift between soaring sandstone cliffs while on the lookout for ancient Native American petroglyphs on the canyon walls, as well as local wildlife. We continue on to southern Utah and Bryce Canyon National Park, stopping for lunch along the way. We dine together tonight.

Accommodations: Best Western Bryce Canyon Grand Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: Bryce Canyon National Park

Despite its name, Bryce isn't truly a canyon at all, but a series of natural cliffs and amphitheaters carved into the region's plateaus. The result: a stunning array of hoodoos, natural stone pillars and spires reminiscent of a child's drip sandcastle. Thousands of these delicate structures stand side by side along the canyon's ridgelines, lending a dramatic atmosphere to this remote location. In the park's visitor center, we see a film about the unusual geology here then have the day free to explore at our own pace. Our full day of natural splendor concludes with dinner together tonight.

Accommodations: Best Western Bryce Canyon Grand Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8: Bryce Canyon National Park/Zion National Park

We depart this morning for Zion National Park, another celebrated Utah destination. Upon arrival at midday, we have lunch on our own and then begin our visit at Zion's nearby visitor center, where we learn about this inimitable region that encompasses four separate biomes: desert, riparian (or riverbank), woodland, and coniferous forest. Zion itself is so named for the 15-mile-long, 2,500-foot-deep Zion Canyon cutting through the park's western half. We get our first taste of Zion's wonders this afternoon and then enjoy dinner together this evening.

Accommodations: Hampton Inn & Suites Springdale/Zion National Park

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 9: Zion National Park

We spend the day amid the wondrous natural world of Zion National Park. Despite its modest size, Zion counts as one of the most diverse national parks in the United States. Deserts and forests, rivers and canyons, buttes and natural arches all greet us here, along with numerous plant and animal species. As with most of the Southwest, the area is dominated by red-rock bluffs that show eons of sediment buildup; indeed, the rock formations here represent about 150 million years of geological history. We take a hike here then have ample free time for exploration and lunch and dinner on our own.

Accommodations: Hampton Inn & Suites Springdale/Zion National Park

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10: Zion National Park/St. George/Las Vegas, Nevada

En route to Las Vegas today, we stop in St. George, Utah, site of the winter home of Mormon leader Brigham Young and where the Mojave Desert, Colorado Plateau, and Great Basin converge in a stunning setting. We have time to explore and have lunch on our own before we continue on to Las Vegas, arriving late this afternoon. Tonight, we celebrate our Southwestern sojourn at a farewell dinner.

Accommodations: Westin Las Vegas

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 11: Depart Las Vegas

This morning we transfer to the Las Vegas airport for our flights home

Meals: Breakfast

PLEASE NOTE

This trip involves considerable walking on uneven terrain in a natural environment. You should be in good physical condition to enjoy the tour to the fullest. While not severe, elevations at some hotel locations (Grand Canyon at 6,800 ft. and Bryce Canyon at 8,000 ft.) could pose problems for guests with certain health conditions. You should consult your personal physician if you have concerns.

This tour itinerary was generated for National Parks of the Southwest on Feb 15, 2024. Please visit the National Parks of the Southwest page at <https://www.odysseys-unlimited.com/tours/north-america/national-parks-southwest/> for the latest and most accurate information.